

# Centennial Challenge Proposal

## Northeast Region

### Preliminary Description

Park or Program: Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area  
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Date Prepared: March 19, 2007

Project/Program Title: **Witness to Civil War in New England—  
Fort Warren National Historic Landmark**



Brief Description (paragraph of 300:

This project will treat the most prominent New England military structure associated with the American Civil War. Built of local granite, Fort Warren was dedicated in 1847 (when war broke out in April 1861 there was still construction debris on the parade ground). Fort Warren served as Boston's main line of defense against invasion by the Confederate Navy, as a recruiting and training camp for Union soldiers, and, most importantly, as a prisoner-of-war camp for Confederate military and political prisoners. After one hundred years of military use the fort was decommissioned in 1947 and the elements have since attacked the once impenetrable structure.

Prisoners held at Fort Warren included the mayor of Baltimore, the governor of Kentucky, and several members of the Maryland Legislature. In November 1861, the Confederate diplomats James Murray Mason and John Slidell were removed from a British ship by the Union and held at Fort Warren until January 1862. Vice-President of the Confederacy Alexander H. Stephens was imprisoned here from May to October 1865.

Various special design features give the fort the character we see today. The main sally port—or entry—incorporates a portcullis and heavy oak door, as well as a drawbridge across a dry ditch. On the far side of the ditch, is a ramp that was protected by a circular masonry demi-lune. Within the fort is a spacious parade ground where a granite central powder magazine remains. The completed fort is a magnificent work, surely ranking among the outstanding classic American fortifications. Remarkably the granite looks strong and true, but minimal maintenance during the past 75 years has led to water infiltration and other damage that would be treated through this project. Some interiors would be adaptively reused for visitor services.

The modified-pentagon shaped Fort Warren dominates 39-acre Georges Island and is the center of the park transportation system. Twenty minutes from downtown Boston, Georges Island contains a large dock, picnic grounds, food service, open fields, paved walkways. Guided tours of historic Fort Warren are offered. A major part of this project is to develop educational and interpretive materials and facilities to tell the story of Fort Warren and the American Civil War; a period that is often overlooked in Revolutionary Boston.

Potential Partner(s):

Massachusetts Department of Conservation & Recreation (DCR)

Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, Office of Public-Private Partnerships

Estimated Costs:

NPS Share: \$4 million

Partner Share: \$4 million

TOTAL Cost: \$8 million

Anticipated Timeframe:

Project Status (is the project in the early planning stages or well along in development?):

NPS and DCR began restoring bluestone walkways and parapet railings in 2006. The Department of Conservation and Recreation also removed lead paint and asbestos in some of the fort areas visited by the public and is currently developing engineering specifications for repair of the historic seawall protecting the fort. A master plan for renovation and conversion of some facilities for park use was developed, but needs to be revisited and cost estimates updated. This project is in the early planning stages.

Approximate fiscal year for start up and completion:

2010-2015